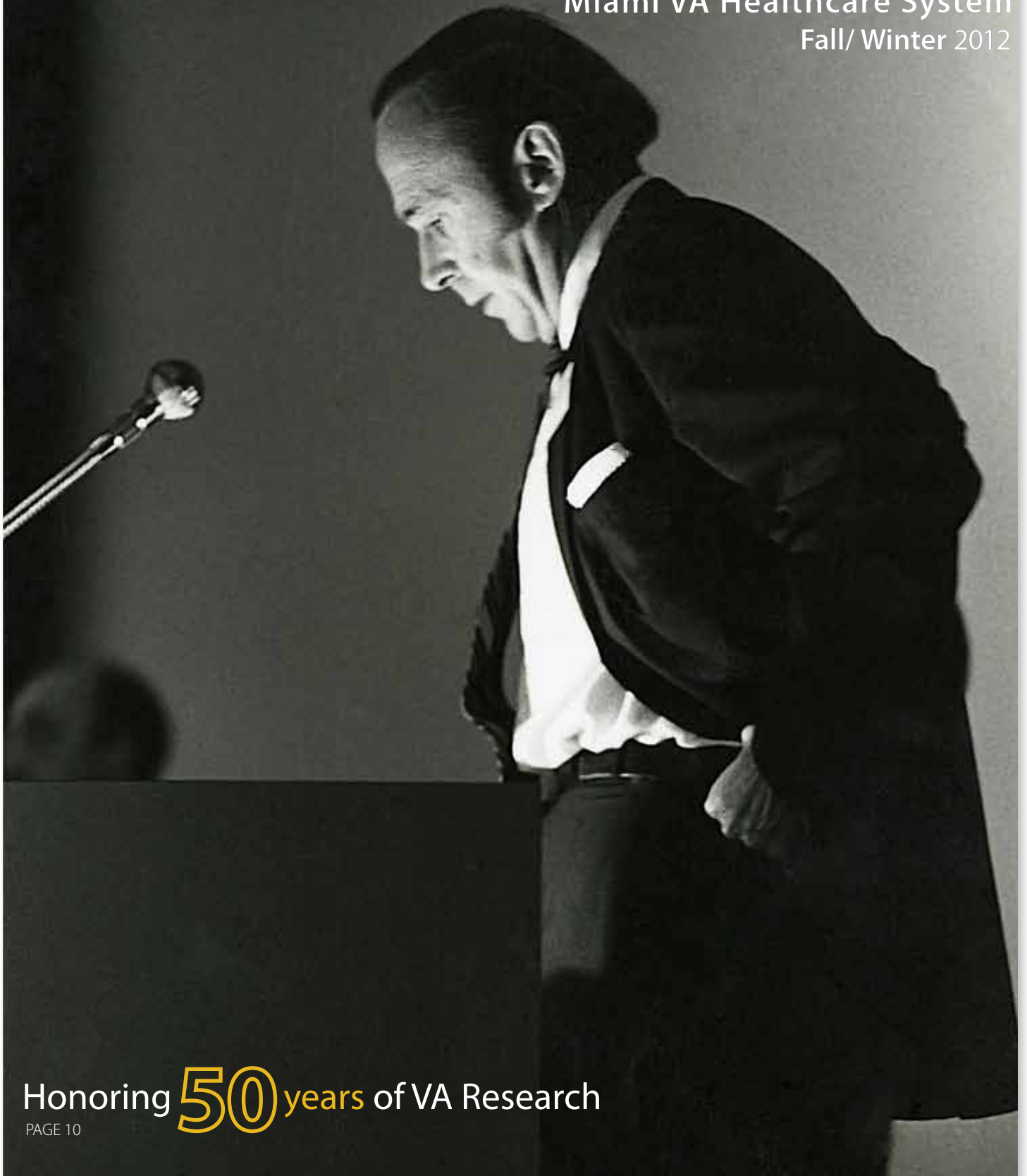


# Miami Veteran

---

Miami VA Healthcare System

Fall/ Winter 2012



Honoring **50** years of VA Research

PAGE 10

## Letter from the Director



In many cultures around the world, this time of year is often spent with family and friends reflecting and planning ahead into the new year. At the Miami VA Healthcare System, we are no different, as we are excited about what 2013 will bring to the Veterans of South Florida. For the last few years we have been hard at work preparing the Miami VA for the future generations of Veterans that we will have the privilege of serving, and in this year we hope to see many of these projects open to our patients.

The Emergency Department has been completely remodeled and will increase our ability to serve Veterans in crisis in either physical or mental anguish. Combined with

our operating suite that is scheduled to open later in 2013, the Miami VA will continue to be a valuable resource for not only South Florida, but the rest of the state and the Caribbean as well.

During these construction projects, we have been steadfast in our dedication to quality, including being recognized for the second straight year as a Gold Award for Stroke Care award winner from the American Heart Association. This award, along with our other centers of excellence, outstanding providers and innovative clinics, are just a few of the many examples of the Miami VA's devotion to our nation's heroes.

Paul M. Russo, MSHA, FACHE, RD  
Director, Miami VA Healthcare System

# Managing Daily Struggles

## Through the PTSD Mobile Apps

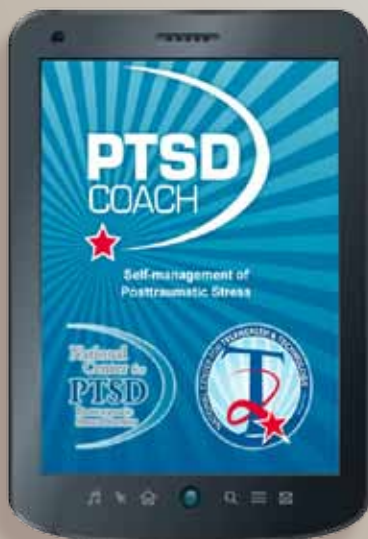
For Charles Johnson, an Army Veteran who served two tours in Vietnam, the VA's PTSD mobile app could have not come soon enough. After suffering from PTSD for more than 30 years, he finally came for help at the Miami VA Healthcare System and learned about the PTSD coach.

"I am grateful that I can use my smart phone to assist in coping with the daily struggles I face," said Johnson.

He is receiving treatment from the Miami VA and uses the treatment companion apps to compliment his in-person PTSD treatment. He did not realize until many years after his return that he was suffering from PTSD and that his drinking and anger issues stemmed from it.

"I am grateful that my wife stayed by my side through all of the difficult times," he said. "Things are better now."

The PTSD Mobile apps were created by VA's National Center for PTSD and its collaborators. The apps include the award winning PTSD Coach, which is the first PTSD treatment companion app available for smart phones and tablets.



The first of its kind to be used by a patient receiving Prolonged Exposure (PE) Therapy for PTSD is the PE Coach. This app helps Veterans and therapists work through the Prolonged Exposure treatment. Features include: education about



*Charles Johnson can access his coach any where as long as he has his smart phone.*

PE therapy and common reactions to trauma; ability to record PE therapy sessions as an audio file on the mobile device; reminders to complete homework; tools to keep track of tasks completed between sessions and the ability to track PTSD symptoms over time.

The PTSD Coach app can help Veterans and their care givers learn about, and manage, symptoms that commonly occur after trauma. Features include: reliable information on PTSD and treatments that work; tools for screening and tracking symptoms; convenient, easy-to-use skills to help handle stress symptoms and direct links to support and help.

While traditional treatment has been beneficial, the natural stressors of life can sometimes overwhelm him, which is when the app comes in. "The best part of using this application is that if there is a need I am a call away from speaking to a mental health professional," he said.

To learn more or to download PTSD apps for patients as well as providers, visit [http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/fslist\\_mobile\\_apps.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/fslist_mobile_apps.asp).



# You Are Not Alone

*Miami VA Supports Caregivers*

**M**iami VA staff know how important it is for Veterans to receive care by a loved one, and also how difficult it is to be a caregiver. Although a demanding job, now with the help of the Caregiver Support Program they don't have to do it alone.

November is National Family Caregivers Month and the Miami VA Healthcare System honored and welcomed local Veteran caregivers during a Family Caregiver Support Resource Fair Nov. 20., while at the same time embracing the opportunity to inform the public of VA and community services available to caregivers and the Veterans they care for.

"Being able to balance care giving, family and work can be both rewarding and very challenging," said Theresa Castro, a reservist in the U.S. Navy and full time caregiver to her husband. Being able to provide his daily care and not having to worry that he is being taken care of by a stranger is a blessing, she said. In addition to caring for her husband, Theresa is also an advocate to service members and their caregivers who may not know of all the services available to them.

During the Family Caregiver Support Resource Fair, caregivers from across the spectrum: mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, expressed their gratitude for the program and support they receive from the Miami VA. These full-time caregivers, like Emmy who cares for her husband, an Army Gulf War Veteran and Maria whose husband is an Army OEF/OIF Veteran, said knowing that they are not alone





and have the VA's support is extremely important. They recognize the importance of providing the care at home and being around the family really helps enhance the Veteran's health and well-being.

For many of the caregivers, the person who left for war isn't the same person who returned home to them. All the caregivers agreed that regardless of the injury; whether traumatic brain injury (TBI), PTSD, or any severe injury, the Veteran and family will need to make adjustments. For example, Maria explained that their two-year-old son is very active and loves running around; while always looking for things (and trouble!) to get into. However, this makes her husband very anxious, which is a new symptom of his service connected injuries.

Xavia Forrester is a U.S. Navy OEF/OIF combat Veteran who is being cared for by her mother Pauline and husband Ronald Desir. Xavia said, "It makes all the difference to have a family member taking care of you instead of an agency." Her husband, also a Veteran said, "We are grateful for everything the VA is doing."

"During the 2012 Family Caregiver Conference it was great to see family caregivers, several of who were spouses, mothers, and adult children come together to receive support, encouragement, and most important, to be validated in their role as family caregivers,"

said Dilia E. Castro, LCSW, Caregiver Support Coordinator. "Once again we reminded them of the importance of their role in the health, wellness and recovery of their loved ones, the Veterans they care for, as well as the importance of their own 'self-care.'"

Also as part of National Family Caregivers Month, a Family Caregiver Conference was organized at the Miami VA. Caregivers could attend classes such as Caregiver



*Caregivers at the November Family Caregiver Conference.*

Considerations for Caregivers of Veterans with PTSD and TBI, The Recovery Way to Self-Care, and Spirituality and Coping with the Caregiver Role.

Caregivers were also able to receive information regarding local VA and community recreational resources, and engaged in group dynamic activities to promote wellness and self-care as well as positive peer interactions. Fifteen family caregivers attended and actively participated in this caregiver support event, and benefited greatly from the support and valuable information that was provided to help them continue to provide care for their Veterans at home.

Family Caregivers of Veterans, who were injured post-9/11, may be eligible for additional services through VA, including a stipend, comprehensive training and medical coverage through VA if they are not already covered by a plan. Contact the Caregiver Support Coordinator for the Miami VA Healthcare System at 305-575-7137.

---

**To learn more about the services and to see if you are currently eligible visit the link below:**  
[http://www.caregiver.va.gov/support\\_benefits.asp](http://www.caregiver.va.gov/support_benefits.asp).



# Finding **Hope** on September 11

“It motivates me to get out and do something,” said Dustin Lewis, U.S. Marine and Army Veteran. “I know if the yard can change, I can change too.”

New vegetable gardens, landscaping, picnic benches and other projects were completed at Keystone Halls as part of the Sept. 11 National Day of Service.

Lewis, fellow residents at Keystone Halls, a transitional living facility that serves Veterans in Broward County, and volunteers from across the Miami and Fort Lauderdale area came together on Sept. 11 to participate in the National Day of Service. The Finding Hope on Sept. 11 projects helped renovate the

facility that serves as a temporary home for many local Veterans.

“It started as a project for them to learn a new skill and it’s grown into this,” said Rebecca Apperson a case manager at Keystone Halls, who originally got the idea for the gardens. “A lot of our Vets are disabled so they can’t really go out, so they are around and it was an idea to get them involved in something for them to do.”

“This is really just going to be the first step in several projects,” said Sander Schrantz, the director of special projects with HandsOn Broward, the group that organized the project. “We hope to paint all the buildings, do murals, plant

gardens, do landscaping, build benches, both at this site and the other sites they have.” “We are really excited to use this as a catalyst to kick that off that process,” said Schrantz.

The volunteers from several organizations including HandsOn Broward, American Express and the Miami Job Corps worked for several hours on the projects. In total 95 people participated in the event that lasted several hours.

“I am hoping the Veterans will get a sense of accomplishment by learning a new skill and taking that forward,” said Apperson.

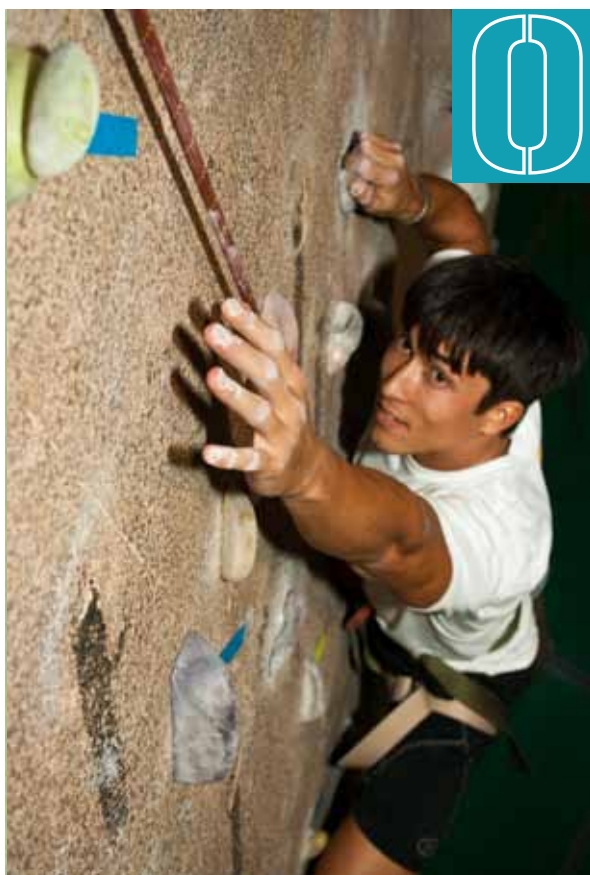
Keystone Halls is a transitional living facility that helps the homeless, most of whom are Veterans. The non-profit provides substance abuse counseling, job skills training, in addition to other case management services for residents.

For more information on how to help homeless Veterans please go to: <http://www.va.gov/homeless/#veterans-tab>.



*Sept. 11 service project helps improve homes for Veterans.*





# ONE FOOTHOLD at a TIME

To the uninitiated, rock climbing seems like a simple enough activity: See the cliff, climb the cliff. To those who climb though, each foothold brings with it accomplishment and every handhold is success. Especially for wounded Veterans from the Miami VA Healthcare System finding ways to stay active and overcome mental and physical wounds.

"When you have Vets who have physical disabilities and have constant pain and worry about their injury or what not, this is the stuff that takes your mind away," said Army Veteran Alex Villar. "It's just you and the wall and your next step. You forget about everything else. For that 20 minutes or 30 minutes doing it, it takes you to a happy place."

Recreation Therapy is an often misunderstood treatment offered by many VA medical centers. By offering alternative treatments and therapies, many Veterans find new ways to channel behaviors and impulses that otherwise could lead to negative outcomes.

*Veteran Derek Bohner makes his next move.*

"If for one second you can get away from where you are mentally," said Villar. "It gets you in touch with who you once were before the service once again. I remember who I once was. I was a different person- and this reminds me again what I was before the service and that everything is okay."

Led by Dave Koster and sponsored by Veterans Ocean Adventures (<http://www.vetssailing.org>), the program took a group of Miami VA Veterans to the X-treme Rock Climbing Gym in South Miami. Working with the community not only provides the Veterans more opportunities, but also forces many of the Veterans to interact and expand their comfort zone as they move into civilian life.

Things like rock climbing, sailing or horseback riding (all programs offered through the Miami VA Recreational Therapy Program) provide the chance for some Veterans to reconnect with who they were before they joined the service. For these Veterans, it's a chance to be active and participate in social activities while under the care of a professional.

"I felt guilty coming, thinking this was only for guys worse off than myself, but you don't always have to have physical disabilities to get involved," said Army Veteran Derek Bohner. "We are able to socialize with other like-minded individuals and its been over five years since ranger school and mountaineering training, so its fun to get back into it."



*On the wall at X-treme Rock Climbing gym.*



## Medical Foster Home Program

### “Where Heroes Meet Angels”

is the slogan for the medical foster program, a service which provides an alternative living situation for our dependent, chronically or terminally ill Veterans with limited family support who prefer a community family setting for their long term care.

This program offers the ability to “age in place”, providing home placement through the collaboration between:

- The Veteran and his/her family or legal representative will need to have the capacity to pay for care/agree to pay for care
- The Medical Foster Home (MFH) caregivers providing the home and 24/7 care
- The VA - through the Home Based Primary Care team providing primary medical care in the homes and overseeing the MFH services. HBPC/MFH team includes an ARNP, RN, dietician, occupational therapist, recreational therapist, pharmacist, social worker, MFH Coordinator, and program support assistant
- Caregivers provide a safe, long-term, home-like environment and an economical long-term care alternative for Veterans who are unable to remain in their own homes because of health issues

Homes inspected by the VA and during routine visits by our Miami VA Home Based Primary Care medical staff, including some that are unannounced, to ensure Veterans are receiving quality care. Most of the foster home caregivers have nursing backgrounds. All selected caregivers have cleared FBI background checks and their relief caregivers are also screened.

The Miami VA Medical Foster Home Program offers private and semi-private



## Innovative Program Hits Home for Veterans

rooms, furnished or unfurnished, 24-hour care and supervision, all meals, laundry service and transportation. Currently we have 10 homes offering care to 17 Veterans between the ages of 24 to 90. All of the foster home caregivers have extensive training and also receive routine training from the VA. Caregivers are invited to participate in yoga and drumming circle as a way to provide stress relief and prevent caregiver burn out.

“The Medical Foster Home Program has offered me a way to earn a living in my home while providing care for our nation’s Veterans. I have family members who are ex-military and this program provides a positive way to give back,” said Carmen Chesman, Medical Foster Home Caregiver.

Veterans participating in the Medical Foster Home Program attend outings with the assistance of the Recreational Therapy department and community sponsors such as Good Hope Equestrian Center, the Fairchild Tropical Gardens for Dementia Care, and the Homestead Reserve Air Base Air Show. These outings engage the Veterans in activities that provide a way for them to have a good time.

For example, at the Air Show the Veterans were greeted by Air Force pilots and they got to see old planes and reminisce of their military days. Recreational Therapist Lisa Martin accompanies Veterans and caregivers on outings said, “It is a pleasure to see how



the Veterans and their caregivers enjoy the outings, whether is to the air show or horseback riding.”

Samuel Hafley, who has been residing for 2 years at the home of Merle McFarlane, said “I give my foster home caregiver an “A+. My experience in the Medical Foster Home Program has been ‘super great.’ I do what I can for myself, but anything that I cannot do, Ms. Merle is always available to help... and with a smile. I don’t have to worry about doing my laundry or making meals. She does everything for me that I am not able to do.”

The program is a unique partnership of VA Social Work Service and VA Home Based Primary Care. Seventy-four VA facilities in 36 states have an active Medical Foster Home Program with hundreds of caregivers opening their homes to Veterans who would otherwise be in a nursing home.

“This is a Program that makes good, financial sense for Veterans,” said William B. Jones, Miami VA Medical Foster Home Coordinator. “Monthly fees at community assisted living facilities and nursing homes can be double and triple what a Veteran may pay in a medical foster home. We monitor Veteran satisfaction on a monthly basis in the Homes and our scores are consistently very high. I would encourage Veterans and families to do their research on placement options in the community so that they understand all their options, and then to take a good look at the Medical Foster Home Program.”

“As our Veterans age, a nursing home is not always the right place or the right thing for our Veterans. I am extremely pleased that we are able to offer this type of living arrangement. It’s a chance to give back to our Veterans. It’s a commitment and a calling on behalf of the caregivers,” said Paul Russo, Medical Center Director.

If you are or know an eligible Veteran who needs this program or you’re interested in becoming a caregiver, call the Medical Foster Home coordinator at (305) 575-7000, ext 3674 or visit online: [http://www.va.gov/geriatrics/guide/LongTermCare/Medical\\_Foster\\_Homes.asp](http://www.va.gov/geriatrics/guide/LongTermCare/Medical_Foster_Homes.asp).

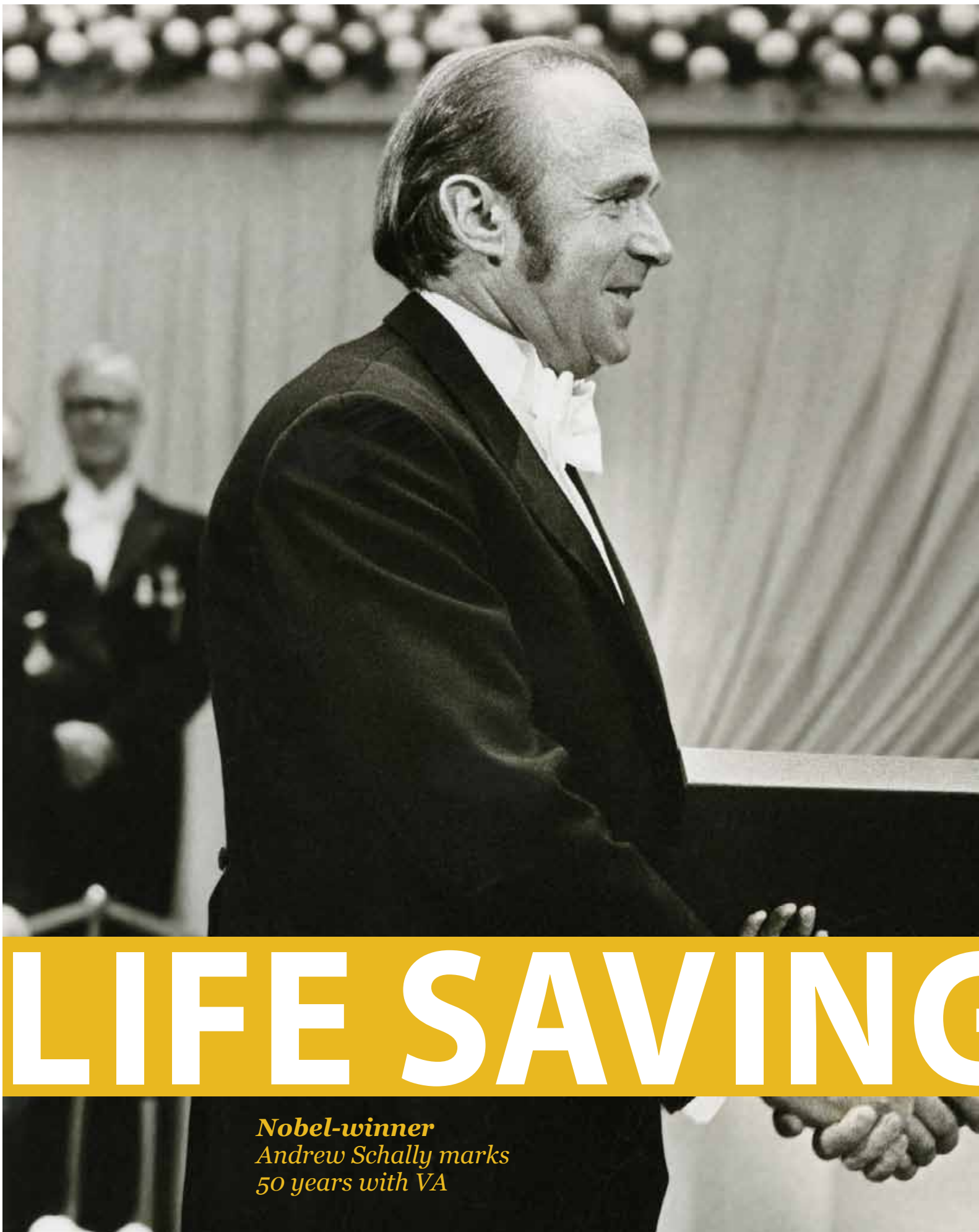


## Professional Care, Excellent Service

The Medical Foster Home program is a community-based living arrangement for Veterans who are unable to live independently because of physical or mental impairments or disabilities.

*The Veteran requires the following to be eligible for the Medical Foster Home program:*

- The Veteran requires ALF/NH level of care (need assistance with ADL's, medication management, meal preparation, etc.)
- The Veteran will need to have medical clearance in the form of a negative chest x-ray or negative PPD
- The Veteran needs to be alcohol and illicit drug-free



# LIFE SAVING

***Nobel-winner**  
Andrew Schally marks  
50 years with VA*







**D**r. Andrew Schally may not yet have found the fabled “cure for cancer,” but he’s come about as close as any biomedical researcher.

*Schally’s career has spanned countries and continents.*

Nowadays, well into his 80s and having just marked his 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a VA lab researcher, the winner of the 1977 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine is still hot on the trail of compounds he believes will revolutionize cancer treatment. And over his decades-long career, he has been credited with huge advances in a range of additional medical fields, such as gynecology, gastroenterology, and endocrinology.

On Oct. 19, friends and colleagues of Schally gathered at the Miami VA Medical Center to commemorate his 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary conducting research within VA. The department presented Schally with a plaque recognizing his “extraordinary accomplishments over more than 50 years and [his] contributions to numerous medical breakthroughs and research advancements.”

Born in Europe, Schally came to Canada, and later the U.S., after World War II. He joined VA in 1962 and set up a lab devoted to studying the brain and hormones. His early work showed how the pituitary gland and certain other glands are regulated by the region in the brain called the

hypothalamus. The work, considered the foundation of modern endocrinology, earned him his Nobel in 1977. The prize was shared with Rosalyn Yalow, a friend and VA colleague who pioneered the field of radioimmunoassay, and hormone researcher Roger Guillemin.

In his early years as a researcher, Schally’s focus was on reproductive health. He helped develop both fertility and contraceptive compounds. His work since then has pyramided on those early discoveries. In an interview with VA Research Currents, Schally credited his scientific curiosity for fueling his long list of achievements in medical science. “This is a trait I still have,” he said. “I want to know how nature controls these mechanisms.”

In the 1970s, due in part to a sense of ethical responsibility, Schally shifted his focus to cancer research. “I began to see the role of hormones breast and prostate cancer was much greater than originally demonstrated,” he explains. “We had patients with various tumors. We could inject our hormones and show

inhibition of the tumor. So, I realized I would be a fool—even scientifically criminal—to not use in oncology some of the hormones which I discovered in the brain.”

### Harnessing anti-cancer hormones

One of his key discoveries has been harnessed in the fight against cancer. The current treatment for testosterone-dependent prostate cancer is derived from a brain chemical called luteinizing hormone-releasing hormone (LHRH), which Schally discovered. He calls LHRH the “biggest prize” of his long career.

“After I gave my lecture on the discovery of LHRH to 2,000 people in San Francisco in June of 1971,” he recalls, “the audience disappeared suddenly to phone the structure all over the world, in view of its expected medical importance.”

Another hormone that has figured largely in Schally’s work is growth hormone-releasing hormone, or



GHRH. Schally and others showed that the molecule is a growth factor for several types of tumors. Several compounds developed and studied by Schally block the effects of this hormone—and thereby may thwart cancer.

Schally has also explored potential cancer treatments based on hormone analogs—modified compounds that resemble hormones but can pack 100 times the punch of their natural counterparts.

All in all, he says, “I believe we are very, very close to new methods for cancer treatment.”

The Nobelist brims with excitement when describing the “smart” chemotherapies he is working to

develop—therapies that zap cancer cells but leave healthy cells intact.

“The beauty of these methods is that they are targeted to tumors. They go to the tumor and can destroy malignant cells. If you repeat it two, three times, you can perhaps totally destroy the tumor. In such a case, you have a treatment that comes very close to being a cure.”

A number of clinical trials testing his experimental therapies are under way around the world, targeting endometrial, ovarian, breast, and prostate cancer.

### Hormone-based therapies may have wider potential

Even as they push forward on potential cancer therapies, Schally and his team are probing the role of hormones such as GHRH in other medical conditions.

In a paper published earlier in 2012 in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Schally and others found that activating a GHRH receptor in rats one month after a

heart attack substantially boosted cardiac function

and stemmed the damage to heart muscle. The results raise the possibility that one day, heart attack patients could receive doses of the hormone to heal the damage to their hearts.

All in all, Schally’s work continues at a remarkable pace. In 2005, when Hurricane Katrina threatened to shut down his lab, then based at the New Orleans VA Medical Center, he moved to the Miami VA to avoid any interruption. He told a reporter from the Sun Sentinel in Fort Lauderdale, “What worried me most was my research would come to a standstill for two or three months. It’s a tremendous relief to be among friends and be able to do something practical to continue my research.”

Now entering his second half-century as a VA researcher, Schally shows no sign of slowing down.

His total number of scientific publications to date, as author or coauthor? More than 2,380—and counting.

*Courtesy VA Research and Development*



*Dr. Robert Petzel presented one of three awards to Schally at the Miami VA event.*




*Dr. Andrew Schally (center) at his 50th Anniversary celebration with fellow researchers, friends, and co-workers.*



# A Little Paint and a lot of Love

Home Depot gives back to the families of Wounded Warriors



More than 100 volunteers from 17 Home Depot stores came to the Miami VA Fisher House to paint bedrooms, lay down new mulch in the gardens, install new shelving and energy efficient lighting and a new grill and patio furniture during their Celebration of Service event the week of Oct. 19.



The project was sponsored by the Home Depot Foundation, which is doing similar projects at Fisher Houses across the nation. "We wanted to do whatever we could to keep the house looking good," said Tonia Morgan, who is a district human resource manager.

In addition to all the painting and yard work, the volunteers installed new energy efficient lighting that will save the Fisher House up to \$16,000 a year.

"Giving back to our Veterans is heart warming," said Morgan. "I can't go to fight in a war, but I can help your family."





# Bringing the COMMUNITY Together in Support of Veterans



*A Miami VA Veteran and volunteer jams with the U.S. Army Band.*

Veterans Day is a special day for the Miami VA and the Veterans we serve throughout South Florida. With community events and special programs throughout the region, Veterans Day is truly a day devoted to saying, “Thanks for your Service.”

At the Miami VA, Veterans Day became a Veterans Weekend with barbeques, car shows, school groups and even the U.S. Army Band from the Maneuver School of Excellence all coming to the main facility.

“We were excited to be here; to be apart of something so great,” said Sgt. Ronald Edwards, a percussionist with the band. The ceremony also included a flag folding ceremony done by local junior ROTC students.

“It’s a big family, here at the VA,” said Bill Leonard, one of the Veterans in attendance. “We are one big family.”

After the ceremony and concert concluded, members of the band took time to speak with Veterans and help serve lunch.

“I am honored to have the opportunity to be with them,” said Edwards. “One day that’s going to be me.”

Meanwhile, the University of Miami along with local chapter



*Veterans & active duty soldiers get to know each other on Veterans Day.*



*Paying respect. A ROTC student stops to salute the flag during the flag ceremony.*

of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and the Miami VA, brought together hundreds of supporters to raise awareness for military and Veteran suicide.

The Walk Out of the Darkness is an annual event around the country, but this year local organizers wanted to hold it Veterans Day weekend to bring

attention to Veterans mental health issues.

Miami VA Director Paul Russo joined Dr. Daniella David in explaining the services offered by VA and helping educate the community on the effects of PTSD, depression and suicide on individuals, families and even the community.

# Learning from the Best



*Students interact with SAM, an interactive patient doll.*

Day in the Life of a Nurse is a yearly program organized by The Nursing Consortium of South Florida to introduce the career of nursing to local high school students.

This year, the Miami VA hosted 15 students from schools in Hialeah. Peter C. Battye, organized the event, which highlighted a number of nursing and medical fields that the Miami VA supports in order to serve our Veterans.

The students arrived early Nov. 9 and were welcomed by Deborah Clarke, the Chief Nurse of Surgery. The students then listened to a presentation on nursing informatics by Thomas Shelton. They were then introduced to "SAM" (Scenario Activated Manikin) during a presentation on medical simulation by Jamdra Sureda.

The students visited different locations throughout the hospital, including the operating room, Med/Surge unit, Telemetry units and the SICU where they received presentations from Valkiria Campos, Hilda Bullard Coach, Miguel Toledo, and Erick Sureda. Karlos Gonzalez, assisted with escorting the students throughout the hospital.

The morning program ended with a pizza lunch and one last presentation on hand washing, by Pamela L. Johnson. Lastly Assistant Director Dr. Gwendolyn Findley gave a farewell. The students left the facility enthused and inquired about volunteering next summer.

Joe Motes, a U.S. Marine Corps Vietnam Veteran and volunteer at the Broward County VA Outpatient Clinic, was recently named Broward Veteran of the Year by the American Military Organization at a dinner co-hosted by Congressmen Ted Deutch and Allen West.



*Congressman Ted Deutch, left, presenting Joe Motes his award.*

Joe is very active with several Veterans and community organizations, including the American Legion, The Marine Corps League, Disabled American Veterans, and the Sons of the American Revolution.

Motes also joined other VA volunteers from around South Florida at the annual Veterans Day tradition of laying wreaths at the South Florida National Cemetery in Lake Worth, Fl. These volunteers placed more than 11,000 wreaths, all of which were paid for through fundraising and donations.

This year they were able to increase their coverage dramatically with the help of the Margate Chapter of AmVets, which donated an additional 8,000 wreaths. Altogether they were able to lay wreaths on more than 95% of the grave sites. "Next year, we plan to shoot for 100%, and we'll need more organizations on board to meet this goal," Motes said.

As a volunteer, Joe is someone the patients single out as one they are happy to see upon entering the building. He always has a smile on his face and welcomes his fellow Veterans with open arms.

## Not Your Ordinary Joe

**Broward County**  
Veteran of  
the Year



# New Tech Keeps Family Only a Touch(screen) Away

**F**or the residents of the Miami VA Community Living Center, video games, mp3 players and online chat sessions with family aren't just for the grandkids at college. By using the latest in technology, CLC residents are experiencing a better quality of life for themselves and their families.

Recreational therapists in the CLC take advantage of a range of technologies from cassette tapes, MP3 players, video games and touch screen computers to help homebound Veterans experience the world outside the hospital walls.

"We are focused on addressing quality of life as identified by our Veterans," said Lyn Blank, a recreational therapist in the CLC.

Different technologies being used by the CLC include MP3 recordings of the bible and other music that residents can listen to at their leisure, video games that can be played on the Wii gaming system and a new interactive computer system called Its Never Too Late.

"The first thing we do is assess someone's needs, interests and concerns as well as their symptoms and the reason they're admitted into the facility as a basis for the treatment we provide," said Blank.

For instance, the Wii gaming system is used to engage Veterans in activities they are no longer able to do, like fishing or playing tennis, said Blank. It can also help address physical rehabilitation needs.

"These things can be used as leisure, but also can be used as treatment to help someone gain as much functional independence as they can and participate in activities they enjoy," said Blank.



*Daniel Ranes, a WWII Army Veteran, uses the It's Not Too Late computer system.*

Most recently the therapists have been using a system called Its Never Too Late. IN2L is a system that uses an infrared touch screen computer to help Veterans learn to navigate the web and take advantage of the information there.

"We use this for teaching people how to use computers in general," said Blank. "We use it to address any or all of the five domains that people have whether it's cognitive, physical, social, emotional. We can also do spiritual on here."

The system helps Veterans do everything from watching a live stream of nursing puppies, to watching travel videos, playing games, listening to music and even sending postcards.

The system is refreshed every other month with new movies, music and games, and even allows Veterans to Skype with family and friends.

"We can do this [games] in a group; we can do this one-to-one with someone, but it encourages them to use their mind and their memory," said Blank.

The computer also comes with adaptive keyboards and mouse devices to allow Veterans who are bed-bound to use the system.

"It helps us, help Veterans be the people they are," said Blank. "Age and infirmity doesn't change us, but technology helps us be who we are."

"I like food, photography, making copies," said Daniel Ranes, a resident at the CLC and World War II Army Veteran, who uses the system daily.

"I'll do everything, see my children, great-grandchildren, go to Paris," said Ranes. "I can't do all of that, but they bring it to me."

**JOIN US**

Feb 21st  
for the

Pompano Beach

**GRAND OPENING!**

## *Services for Combat Veterans*

### *Now Available in Pompano Beach*

Vet Centers focus on one thing – helping combat Veterans readjust to civilian life. And now, Veterans in Broward County have a Vet Center of their own.

Because of their slightly different mission, Vet Centers offer a range of services that expand and build on what the Miami VA already offers. By working together, the Miami VA and the three Vet Centers – Miami, Fort Lauderdale and Pompano Beach – are able to help Veterans heal, adjust and transition into successful lives after their military experience.

The new Pompano Beach Vet Center on Sample Road provides private space for counselors to help combat Veterans and their families readjust to being together and charting a new course in the civilian world.

For more information about what services Vet Centers offer, visit <http://www.vetcenter.va.gov>.

#### *Local Vet Centers:*

**Pompano Beach**  
(954) 984-1669

**Ft. Lauderdale**  
(954) 356-7926

**Miami**  
(305) 718-3712

**Key Largo** (outstation)  
(305) 451-0164

## **SERVICES**

The following services are available at Vet Centers

- Individual & Group Counseling
- Martial and Family Counseling
- Bereavement Counseling
- Military Sexual Trauma Counseling
- Benefit Claims Referral
- Community Education
- Substance Abuse Counseling
- Employment Counseling



# Coming Soon to the Miami VA



I can check-in  
from the kiosk.

And there's always  
someone to help  
if I need it.

VetLink connects me  
to my information!

- Appointments
- Insurance updates
- Contact updates



2 CREAMS,  
1 SUGAR,  
& YOUR DAILY  
VETERAN  
UPDATE

follow us:

[facebook.com/vamiami](https://facebook.com/vamiami)

[twitter.com/miamivamc](https://twitter.com/miamivamc)

[www.miami.va.gov](http://www.miami.va.gov)

# HAPPY NEW YEAR

from the  
**Miami VA**



Our mission is to honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

Our vision is to continue to be the benchmark of excellence and value in health care and benefits by providing exemplary services

that are both patient-centered and evidence-based.

This care will be delivered by engaged, collaborative teams in an integrated environment that supports learning, discovery, and continuous improvement. It will emphasize prevention,

population, health, and contribute to the Nation's well-being through education, research, and service in national emergencies.

For more information about the Miami VA Healthcare System, visit [www.miami.va.gov](http://www.miami.va.gov).

*This publication is presented by the Miami VA Healthcare System.  
For more information please contact Shane Suzuki, Public Affairs Officer, [shanesuzuki@va.gov](mailto:shanesuzuki@va.gov).*

**MVAHS** **VA** **HEALTH CARE** Defining **EXCELLENCE** in the 21st Century  
PROUD TO SERVE VETERANS